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AN APPOINTMENT THAT LED TO QUESTIONS

CPYRGHT

A close friend of South Vietnam's late President Ngo Dinh Diem has joined the U. S. Embassy staff in Saigon as a special assistant to Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge.

The appointment of Maj. Gen. Edward Lansdale (Ret.) was requested by Ambassador Lodge. Still, Vietnamese sources found it strange that General Lansdale came back to Saigon to work for the man generally regarded as having played a major role in the downfall of President Diem.

In Washington quarters, the Lansdale appointment is viewed as recognition at the highest levels of the necessity of paying more attention to winning the loyalty of Vietnam's peasant farmers. General Lansdale has always urged U. S.-supported regimes in Southeast Asia to carry a revolutionary message—as did the regime of the late President Ram6n Magsaysay when it put down the Huk revolt in the Philippines after World War II.

General Lansdale was in the Philippines—a confidant and adviser to Mr. Magsaysay—when the techniques were developed which routed the Huks and won back the allegiance of the peasants. Land reform was an essential element of the Magsaysay program.

Later, General Lansdale was posted to Saigon, where he interceded for Mr. Diem against his critics in 1955, after the Geneva agreement divided Vietnam.

General Lansdale helped develop the U. S. Special Forces. That was part of his job as an assistant to Defense Secretary Robert McNamara, from which he retired in 1963.

General Lansdale's job in Saigon: to bring South Vietnam's Government closer to the peasants, win support in territories retrieved from the Viet Cong.